

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

August 10, 2023

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

Montanans are rightly concerned with the U.S Department of Education's recent interpretation of Section 13401 of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) to prevent schools from utilizing federal education funding to support archery and firearm training courses, including for hunter education.

Hunting and shooting sports are deeply rooted traditions in Montana, and training is an important component of developing safe, responsible, and ethical hunters, shooters, and bowhunters. For that reason, our public schools have long worked with Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) specialists to train young Montanans in the proper handling of firearms and archery equipment.

In partnership with FWP, more than 200 elementary and secondary schools across the state, including many in our rural and tribal communities, are eligible to provide archery programs as part of their curriculum and offer elective hunter education classes. These hands-on safety and skills training programs not only provide young Montanans the confidence to safely enjoy our outdoor traditions, but also make our communities safer.

This week, the Department defended its interpretation of the law jeopardizing these training programs, offering to "provide technical assistance on legislative language to address this issue." This is a wholly insufficient, bureaucratic response. I urge the Department to act without delay to reverse its decision and issue new guidance to protect archery and hunter education programs in Montana schools.

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If the Biden administration is unwilling to reverse course, I urge Congress to further clarify the BSCA to protect young Montanans' access to hunter education programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte". The signature is stylized with a large "G" and "G" and a prominent "A".

Greg Gianforte
Governor

Cc: Senator Steve Daines
Senator Jon Tester
Congressman Ryan Zinke
Congressman Matt Rosendale